

# HOMETOWN

Tuesday, May 12, 1998

Camas-Washougal, Washington, Post-Record

Section B

## So long Farrell & Eddy



**LEFT** — Anna Roffler Eddy stands behind a table in the millinery department of C.E. Farrell General Merchandise. The department was the idea of her sister, Rose Roffler Farrell, whose husband, Charlie, owned the store. Also pictured in the 1912 photograph is Mrs. Frank Wright, otherwise known as Martha Goot.

**ABOVE** — Anna models a hat made by her sister.

**INSET LEFT** — Charlie Farrell, age 22, when he came to La Camas from Kansas in 1891.

**INSET RIGHT** — Rose Roffler Farrell in a picture taken in the early 1900s.

**LOWER LEFT** — The store as it appeared when Farrell bought it in 1903. This old frame building was torn down in 1924 and replaced with the present one. Photos courtesy of Glenda Farrell Schun.

### □ The store that's served the Camas area since 1903 closed shop Saturday

By Mara Stine  
Post-Record Staff

Change is life and life is change. And nobody knows this better than the folks at Farrell & Eddy, the community's premier department store, which closed its doors for the last time on Saturday.

Back when Charles Eugene Farrell, a young Irish lad from Kansas, came to the community in 1891, bustles were just beginning to fade from fashion. The tall, willowy Gibson girl's ensemble, including corset, shirtwaist and floor-length skirts, was the latest style and Camas, then called La Camas, was an unincorporated speck of a town.

The epitome of the Wild West, population was around 300 and the village boasted three general stores, a blacksmith, two barbers and a doctor who made house calls on horseback. His medical supplies were tucked into saddle bags.

Main Street was a strip of mud full of rocks and holes with horses, cattle and pigs roaming free. At night, those who traveled the roads carried a lantern to keep from tripping over animals and into pits.

Women were able to keep the hems of their long skirts from getting caked with mud by walking along wooden sidewalks lining store fronts — but

even those had holes here and there.

When Charlie arrived at age 22, he got work at the Columbia River Paper Company's mill in the beater room. Dick Drewfs, whose sister later became Charlie's daughter-in-law, still remembers hearing his stories.

"Charlie would talk your leg off," he recalls, adding that Charlie told him that when he worked at the mill, everybody was barefoot. And the pay wasn't much better than the uniform. He took home \$1.50 a day, whether he worked 10 or 15 hours, and was paid in gold and silver coins. But after he married Ursula "Rose" Roffler in 1901, Charlie started thinking about his future with his new wife, who also worked at the mill. They decided they wanted something better.

Two years later, in 1903, Charlie took three days off work and never went back — except for a tour 50 years later. Instead, he bought the Glenn Ranck General Store on the corner on what is now Northeast Fourth Avenue and Birch Street, a building that was built in 1887. Charlie renamed the establishment C.E. Farrell General Merchandise.

Barrels of pickles, flour, sugar, syrup and other staples filled the store. Customers bought produce in bulk, which was weighed out in pounds. Farmers brought in eggs and other goods to barter for the bolts of fabric, mostly cotton and wool, notions, such as buttons and thread, and other household items, including hardware, that were also housed under the store's roof. It was the original one stop shopping center. Deliveries were made by horse and wagon. Business was good. In 1907, they had their first son, Glenn, in the apartment above the store where they lived. Another son, Clayton, was

born, and in 1917 the family moved into a grand 12-room two-story house at 416 N.E. 10th St. — a home built by Rose's brother, John Roffler. Townsfolk thought it odd that the couple chose to live out in the country, but they seemed to like walking to the store along Fifth Avenue.

Charlie gained a reputation as a smart business man. Always impeccably dressed with a suit, tie and pocket watch — the chain dangling in an arc across his vest — the quiet, reserved man with a bushy mustache was often found sweeping off the walkway outside.

But Charlie wasn't the only mind behind the business. His wife, Rose, one of the mill's first full-time women employees, had some professional acumen of her own. Rose was a woman who appreciated quality merchandise and had a flair for fashion. When they opened the general store, people bought fabric and sewed their own clothes. At the turn of the century, floor-length skirts were the norm as were large brimmed dressy hats. And during the teens, skirts varied from full bouffant ones hitting just below the knee to hobble skirts, which measured as little as three feet around the hem line, making movement close to impossible.

Hats were also a fashion staple. But to get good-quality fashionable ones, women had to spend a day on the ferry traveling to Portland or Vancouver. The steamboat lone stopped anywhere along the shoreline and islands, picking up passengers along the way. Travel time alone for the round-trip journey took eight hours.

Charlie agreed to clear some space in the general store over by the yard goods for a millinery display. It was a smart move. His wife knew what people liked and the market was huge. Hats, made from everything from felt to straw, boasting trimmings such as feathers, veils, flowers, ribbon and lace, were selling like ice cream in a heat wave.

Rose's hats were so popular people came from Portland and Vancouver to buy them. She opened her own store in Vancouver and also began supplying her creations for the millinery department of Bannan's Department Store in Oregon City, Ore. — a department managed by her sister, Anna Roffler Eddy.

The two sisters were very similar and yet quite different. Both had heads for business and were artistically inclined. Originally from Minnesota, their family of Swiss-German ancestry moved to Camas in 1889. Both were slender and great cooks. Anna was a tiny, petite woman standing around 5 feet tall and was said to

have a beautiful smile. Rose was much taller, closer to 5-foot-7, and was known for her sweet disposition. But where Rose was the sugar, Anna was the spice. She was more stubborn and fiery than her older sister. Yet, both were always up to date on the latest fashions.

But being well-dressed themselves wasn't enough. They wanted others to be as well. Evelyn Spellman, who has worked at the store for the last 24 years, recalls a story about her aunt, a woman with an ample bosom. For years, she wore brassieres too tight for her in an effort to minimize her bust line. Rose put a stop to that. She gave her a proper fitting and her aunt swore it improved the way she looked.

Meanwhile business boomed and time marched on. With World War I behind them and prosperity on the home front, the Roaring '20s ensued. Hemlines inched upward and women even put rouge on their knees to spotlight the skimpy, short skirts taking center stage. As cars became more common, large dressy hats moved over, making room for close-fitting ones that not only flattered that flapper bob, but weren't knocked off the noggin when getting in and out of automobiles.

During this time, the store remained a success and even expanded. In 1935, J.C. Penney moved across the street, so Rose and Anna moved their shop down the road, back to the place it had all started. But it was bigger and better than ever before, thanks to Charlie's help remodeling the store.

"It was quite posh," Mikesell says, adding that even though times were tough, the merchants still put things on revolving credit accounts. "If you ran shy on cash or owed a bill, they were patient. And it might happen for several months in a row."

The new store was so breathtaking, it distracted people from the dismal economy. Beautiful French doors in the back led to a saloon called the Beauty Maid. Dick Drewfs remembers the plush carpet, a huge mirror and fashionably dressed mannequins in the windows.

"It was big time stuff for us," he says. "If you wanted to see that kind of stuff, you'd have to go to Portland."

time, Anna and her husband settled in Camas two blocks from her sister, moving into a stucco home, at 832 N.E. Fifth Ave., built by her brother. In 1924, after the sudden death of Charlie's younger brother John, he decided to get out of the grocery business. The store was torn down, rebuilt, rented out to J.C. Penney and Charlie became a landlord. At the request of local women, Rose moved her millinery business from the general store to their home on

